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ABSTRACT

To establish a context for envisioning the school counselor of 2021, it is first necessary to envision the public school of the future. In this chapter, a trend in which schools move away from large institutional educational structures, with an emphasis on redesigning them into small learning centers within the larger establishment is predicted. These smaller learning centers will operate more like the universities of today, with small departments having specializations and themes in different areas. Within this configuration, teachers, principals, and school counselors will assume new roles to facilitate learning. Within the context of these changes, the author suggests that the school counselor will undergo a major shift and assume key leadership roles in school reform, creating healthy school climates, and serving as an essential resource for teachers, parents, and community counselors. (Contains 12 references.) (GCP)

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Paradigms for Future School Counseling Programs

By

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Chapter Three

Paradigms for Future School Counseling Programs

Fred Bemak

To establish a context for envisioning the school counselor of 2021, it is first necessary to envision the public school of the future. Many of today's schools in the United States have fallen behind the pace of technological, ecological, social, and economic advances. We maintain large institutions, which for many of our youth have been ineffective, despite the fact that in the mid-1990s, the United States spent $275 billion on public K–12 education. This is particularly striking considering that expenditures on public education have been declining since 1950, which may contribute to problems such as an increasing group of students who are at risk of school failure (Carlson, 1996; Dryfoos, 1990); increased violence and crime in the schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1998); high rates of teenage pregnancy (Dryfoos, 1990); drug-infested environments (Kirst, 1991); and school climates that students and faculty experience as unsafe and dangerous (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). A report by The Education Trust (1998) clearly documents the discrepancy in academic achievement between minority students and White students and between students from lower socioeconomic classes and those from middle and upper classes. However, the problems of schools are not specific only to poor districts and areas with high concentrations of minority students. Other factors affecting all schools, in addition to problems based on economic conditions, include pedagogy; politics of communities and school boards; training for educational professionals; and the lack of clarity regarding educational missions, which neglect values and cultures of learning that reflect the whole person.

Demographics and societal changes also have great influence on schools. It is anticipated as we move forward through the next two decades that a number of societal, technological, educational, and philosophical changes will significantly affect schools. I would suggest that nuclear families

as we know them today will dramatically change; children in special education classes will be mainstreamed and exceed the current figure of 19%; technological advances will prevail in school cultures and play a major role in education; and communities will more effectively define their role in partnerships with schools and assist in local management.

Currently, children spend only 19% of their time connected with schools. I suggest that this figure will significantly increase. In addition, there will likely be an exploration of shifting time schedules for schools, with openings and closings at different times throughout the day and night that are more reflective of research regarding children's biological rhythms, more responsive to activities outside the current limited scope of school days, and more convenient to parents' schedules. Within the school itself, I see a trend that moves away from the large institutional educational structures as we see them today, with an emphasis on redesigning them into small learning centers within the larger establishment. These smaller learning centers will operate more like the universities of today, with small departments having specializations and themes in different areas. Within this configuration, teachers will have different roles to facilitate learning, rather than teach learning. They will assume more of the roles of facilitator, helper, and mentor, while relying heavily on technology as a teaching vehicle. Similarly, the principal's role will become one of a consensus manager, bringing together leadership teams of respective staff in the schools to provide collaborative guidance, leadership, and vision. Technological advances will allow teachers more time and communication with parents, because the computer linkages of the future will follow the development of phones and televisions, whereby almost all homes are wired to technology, including those of families from low-income backgrounds. Subsequently, school counselors will play a different role than they do today. I suggest that within the context of these changes, future public education systems must address changing educational, social, and psychological problems, and I contend that it is the school counselor who must lead the way to tackle these issues.

Following in the Footsteps of Public Psychiatric Hospitals

An analogy of the transformation of schools may be the evolution of the large public psychiatric institutions.

Contemporary schools could be viewed as similar to large public psychiatric hospitals of the past, which were developed to accommodate large numbers of patients, with the aim of serving the most people at the least expense. They adopted all the worst qualities of institutionalization, with dehumanizing practices that were more concerned with the maintenance of the institutional rules and regulations than the care or treatment of the patients. The realization that the goals of psychiatric treatment were not being met, and people were not being released or growing and developing as a result of these large institutions, led to deinstitutionalization and humanization of these facilities. Smaller facilities in public and private hospitals, group homes, independent apartment living, and other forms of deinstitutionalized care were developed in an attempt to shift from the larger, less effective institutions to more effective treatment models.

This may parallel the modern day reality of large numbers of schools, many of which are experiencing problems similar to those of the former large public psychiatric institutions: These problems include emphasis on social control and cost, deterioration of standards, not attaining goals, and dehumanization. Some schools may be viewed as large, oftentimes unmanageable, institutions, sometimes without success in meeting their goals to educate students, and sometimes with more of an emphasis on social control than on education (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997). In some regions, the environment both inside and outside of schools has become unsafe, leading to a greater emphasis on control. There is an increasingly concerted effort to focus on records and documentation of goal attainment in the schools, with neglect of the human values, influences, interpersonal relationships, and qualities that comprise the culture of any school environment. These issues oftentimes result in schools falling short of meeting the goals for academic achievement, as well as frustration and disillusionment of teachers and staff; more rigid and unreasonable rules and procedures as a reaction to the difficulties in meeting educational goals; and even, in some instances, neglect of educational goals in attempts to control the environment better. Furthermore, escalating crises, rather than education, may dominate time and energy in many schools.

Community Learning Centers

To address these issues, I propose that schools restructure to form Community Learning Centers (CLCs). The CLCs would consist of students studying interdisciplinary subject areas in small groups. Teachers and staff would guide and facilitate learning, and each CLC would be part of a larger school. The culture of each CLC would be important in teaching about values, community, and learning, in concert with traditional academic subjects, and each CLC would contribute to the larger school environment, which would house multiple CLCs. CLCs and schools would be far more integrated with the community and families of students, through technology and classes that are not bound by the institutional walls. Time spent on school-related activities would be up from today's 19% to about 45%, and schools would be far more accessible and flexible with schedules, including offering long evenings and weekends as optional times to learn.

Questions for Reflection

If CLCs are to be the design of the future, a number of questions are raised regarding the future school counselor. Within this framework, is there school counseling? If so, what do counselors do and what kind of programs do they design? What is their mission? What are their goals, and are these goals compatible with the objectives of the educational facilities where counselors work? How is the counselor's job defined and structured? What kind of hours do counselors keep, and is their job focused on working with students, teachers, parents, administrators, businesses, community personnel, or others?

What to Be Called: Identity Issues

A first and immediate concern that has significant implications for job and identity is what to call guidance counselors. Currently, they are called both school counselors and guidance counselors. I would suggest that the term *guidance counselor* will be replaced by *school counselor.* This relates to past associations with the word *guidance* and the implication that it is more vocationally focused in accordance with the vocational and school guidance movements of the past (Bemak, 2000), which originated with Frank Parsons in the early 1900s.

Along with the new and accepted terminology of "school

counselor" will be the redefinition of the position that will not only define the importance of the school counselor, but also clarify implicit and explicit assumptions about the role and function of the job. As a result, principals, teachers, parents, and community personnel of the future will be clear about what a counselor does and how those activities contribute to the educational mission of the school. It is my belief that this clarification will be essential in defining the responsibility and role of school counselors within the context of transforming schools and attaining educational goals. In fact, school counselors of the future will be moving toward assuming leadership roles in their assigned CLCs and schools. They will be responsible for educating teachers, administrators, and parents about issues such as child development, mental health as it relates to academic achievement, cultural learning styles, career development and opportunities, college placement, course tracking, group process and relationships, community relations, and family dynamics as they relate to school performance.

Child Development

Child development will play an important role in education in 2021. Teaching will be more closely linked to research on child development, which will transform some aspects of the transmission of knowledge. School counselors will be the experts in this area, informing teachers and administrators how to apply to the CLCs the most recent knowledge based on scientific study. The capacities, abilities, and potential of students will be far more realized by this linkage of theory to practice. School counselors will be the primary resource in this area, providing information through workshops and technological communication to teachers, parents, and administrators about expected areas of growth and development, anticipated problems and developmental strategies to address those problems, and the relationship of academic achievement to emotional and behavioral problems.

Mental Health

Oftentimes, the school system does not understand or creatively utilize school counselors. Their skills, training, and abilities may go unrecognized and misunderstood within the educational milieu. The future will find a better linkage between the school counselors' expertise and the overall educational goals of public schools, particularly as these areas are interwoven with

mental health. School counselors will become leaders in defining how psychological and social problems interfere with learning and academic performance. This goes far beyond the contemporary school culture in which behavioral interventions are frequently aimed at "quick fixes" without consideration for the deeper underlying mental health needs that interfere with school climate and classroom performance. Sadly, the failure of schools and systems with quick fixes leads to high dropout rates, failure, violence, and disruption in schools. The future school counselor will provide consultation and insight to teachers, parents, and administrators about students and children from a mental health perspective that is linked to, rather than segregated from, the overall educational goals. Identified mental health issues will be referred to community agencies and teams of professionals, who will be working within schools as part of an interface between agencies and schools. To facilitate this process, school counselors will assume the leadership of mental health teams that include personnel from all areas of the school as well as community agencies. This has been shown to be effective in fostering healthier school environments and student mental health (Comer & Woodruff, 1998; Haynes & Comer, 1996). The future work in this area will promote and cultivate healthier school cultures in both the larger school and the CLCs.

Cultural Learning Styles

The teachers of the future will look toward school counselors as the experts on multiculturalism. School counselors will have immersed themselves in understanding differences in culture, especially as the population moves to a society with a minority of Whites (Bemak & Chung, in press). Race relations, discrimination, racism, cultural differences, and cultural learning styles will be areas of intensive study and expertise for school counselors. These areas will be introduced into the schools by the counselors, who will be consultants regarding how the school culture is affected by cultural differences, as well as assistants in understanding students' behavior and response to certain styles of teaching and the school environment. The counselor will be an essential bridge between culture and school practices and norms.

Career Development and Opportunities

In the future, counselors will utilize technology to a far greater extent to facilitate career counseling. There will be easy-

to-use career programs developed with clear and dynamic examples of job opportunities, job placement, requirements for colleges, internship site-placement opportunities, required training for different levels of specific employment, and so forth. Students, with the guidance of the counselor, will be able to visit work sites, interact with the employees about their jobs on and off sites, access extensive reviews of different types of employment, speak with professionals online, enter chat rooms set up by their counselors, and experience a virtual reality job to explore their interests. School counselors will facilitate and process these technological and off-site "immersions" by students, helping them to understand and critique their job options and interests.

With the assistance of technology, school counselors will be able to spend significantly more time in person and online with each student, and ascertain specific in-depth plans and steps necessary for students to accomplish their career goals. A clear pathway of courses, grades, and test scores using data and records will delineate career options for each student.

College and Work Options

School counselors will guide students' futures more intensely. Current data are conclusive in finding that low-income and minority students are counseled toward technical schools and community colleges with far greater frequency than their higher income and White peers, despite equal grades (The Education Trust, 1998). Technology should have a major impact on tracking, course placement, and college recommendations for all students. School counselors will have a responsibility to track students into appropriate and challenging educational paths using a monitoring and counseling process during students' public school years. There will be far more interaction between counselor and student regarding college and work options, using technology and on-site programs to provide more thoughtful and applicable choices for students.

Course Tracking

Course tracking has been done on the basis of individualized records, to the detriment of many students, especially low-income and minority students (The Education Trust, 1998). The future school counselor will use far more sophisticated, technologically advanced means to determine the academic trajectory of all students. This usage of data, and

compilation of information based on more rounded and developed information than just testing scores, will provide many more minority students (who will be majority students in 2021) and low-income students with greater opportunities to achieve their potential. Using the data, counselors will consult with teachers about the performance of all students and keep administrators informed about overall classroom and teacher effectiveness. An important aspect of course tracking will be the school counselor using the data to advocate for students using objective information rather than subjective beliefs (Bemak, 2000).

School Counselors as Guides

Today's school counselor assumes many different responsibilities and tasks, based on particular needs at a given time in a school or schools. One vision of the future school counselor includes having a definitive and established role instead of a "catch-all" role that tries to fill system gaps rather than contribute to better academic achievement for all students through regulated and systematic school counseling plans and activities. In this vision, the future school counselor will be acting as a guide for students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members, rather than as an expert who has all the answers. This would relate to more extensive consultation training, an emphasis on the collaborative process, and a newly developed skill area that provides the tools for school counselors to be guides and facilitators of process rather than content experts. This guidance will be in line with the teacher's redefined role and concurrent with the philosophical values, beliefs, and practices of school systems that aim to guide students in their academic, psychological, and social development rather than teach "at them." Counselors will have a leadership role in this process, coming from a discipline that encourages facilitation and accentuates process. These basic areas will be modified to meet the needs of the school of 2021, and will place the school counselor in a role as one of the lead guides.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement as it relates to counseling has been a neglected area for many school counselors. This is in direct contradiction to the goals of public education, which are increasingly emphasizing academic advancement and performance. In 2021, school counselors will be more consistent in their attempts to be central team members focusing on

academic achievement. Counseling activities, such as guiding the wide array of professionals, students, family members, and associated contributors to the school goals; developing prevention programs; and so forth, will all be geared toward the primary goal of schools, that is, improving academic performance. Counselors will have a clear understanding of this and be able to articulate how their job description, the mission of the school, and their activities coincide.

Partnership with Parents

School counselors will be the liaison with parents. This will be done through technology, outreach, and in-school meetings. Technological advances will allow counselors regularly to communicate with parents, distributing assignments, students' notes on performance, upcoming activities, and questions and recommendations for parents at any given time. In turn, parents may also receive consultation and advice on a regular basis from school counselors via technology. This enhanced communication will provide an important linkage with families in a critical step toward improving family-school partnerships, with an aim toward better academic performance. In addition, school counselors will work flexible hours that accommodate outreach to students' homes on a needed basis. Being in the community is particularly important for some families that are afraid of or resistant to visiting the school. This move to integrate the community by bringing the school counselor to the community is an important step, especially for students who are identified as being at risk. Finally, ongoing in-school meetings will continue between counselors and parents or groups of parents that will offer prevention programs as well as individual consultations.

Partnership with the Community

It has been found that community and parental involvement enhance student performance (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998). Linkages with communities through technology, visits to community sites that are relevant to educational studies, and visits by community representatives will grow significantly by 2021. School counselors will have a major role in coordinating these activities and be responsible for developing new and innovative programs for teachers, parents, and students. The result of these partnerships will be the establishment of a greater "open door" policy in schools: Community agencies and businesses will have greater

access to schools, and, simultaneously, schools will have greater access to community agencies and businesses, who will offer facilities for schools.

School Reform

The school reform movement has been forging ahead without the input or participation of school counselors (Bemak, 2000). I suggest that in 2021, school counselors will be major players in this process, contributing a unique and critical aspect to the continuing development and growth of schools. They will participate in examining school culture and environment, multiculturalism within schools, social and behavioral problems, career counseling, psychological issues, and child development as contributing forces to academic performance.

Teachers as Partners

In 2021, there will be more merging and less differentiation of roles as counselors and teachers assume roles as guides and mentors. This will create more partnerships between counselors and teachers, who will cooperate within and outside the classroom with the common aim of working toward the goals of the school. School counselors will work with teachers to develop prevention programs that they will jointly present in the CLCs and in the larger school. Furthermore, there will be far less division into distinct roles, beginning with graduate training, where counselors, teachers, and administrators will experience collaborative classes and projects. This collaborative spirit will carry over into schools.

Management Councils

Administrative structures of schools will change dramatically by 2021. Rather than a principal having full authority to dictate policies and practices, management councils will be established within schools. Participation in the governance of the school will be equal. School counselors will have an important role in this process, because they may be the only professionals on the management council that are trained in group process. Therefore, they will assume a leadership role in assisting with group dynamics and process, in support of this very different leadership structure.

Conclusion

The school of the future will look very different and will require major role transformations of staff. The future school counselor will undergo a major shift and assume key leadership roles in school reform, creating healthy school climates, and serving as an essential resource for teachers, parents, community personnel, and administrators. This will result in school counselors participating in the management and administration of the overall school and the Community Learning Centers (or a similar system). Furthermore, the school counselor will be the guardian of mental health within the school, linking this closely to academic achievement and growth, career development, and higher education and training. The counselor will also have expertise in the usage of data to guide and support decisions about course enrollment and college options as well as be versatile in technology that can be applied to these functions. Counselors will be more mobile and spend flexible time in schools, as well as in communities and students' homes where linkages will be critical to academic success. No longer will there be questions about what purpose or utility school counselors have within schools; they will have essential roles in making the schools of 2021 work.

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